

Amanda, Adonis, and Ava welcomed Juan home in May.



MEET A MILITARY FAMILY

Watch a VIDEO
Learn more about military life from the Garcia family.

Juan Garcia is in the U.S. military, but his entire family is serving our country.

AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:

What kinds of sacrifices do military families make?

May 25 started out like any other day for Adonis and Ava Garcia. But the siblings from Chula Vista, California, were about to get a big surprise.

The kids and their mom, Amanda, headed out to Adonis's baseball game. After the national anthem played, the players were asked to turn around and face their parents.

Adonis couldn't believe his eyes! His father, Juan, was standing there, reaching out for a hug. The family hadn't seen

Juan in more than six months. He had been away on duty in the United States Navy.

Juan is one of more than 1.3 million people serving in the U.S. military. These troops are making a **sacrifice** for our country. So are their families.

Dad On Duty

Juan has served in the Navy for 19 years. The Navy is the branch of the military that protects and defends our country at sea. Juan spends long stretches of time **deployed** on a ship called an aircraft carrier. He has sailed all over the world. As a

hospital corpsman, his job is to treat sick or injured sailors on the ship.

Juan has been deployed five times, separated from his wife and kids by thousands of miles. Being away from his family for months at a time is difficult—and not just for Juan.

His most recent deployment, in November 2020,



Life at SEA

Juan Garcia was last deployed on the *USS Theodore Roosevelt*. The aircraft carrier is like a floating city. It has a gym, supermarket, and post office. Here's a closer look.

was especially challenging. Because of Covid-19, Juan quarantined on the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* for a month before the ship sailed. On Thanksgiving, his family could only stand across the street as Juan waved from the ship's deck.

"When he leaves, it's sad and we worry about him," 12-year-old Ava says.

A Family's Sacrifice

Deployments aren't the only hardship for a military family.

Every few years, Juan is assigned to a different location. The family, including two adult daughters, has lived in Arizona, Texas, and California.

With each move, they have to pack their belongings, find a new house, and leave friends and family behind. Sometimes they relocate in the middle of the school year.

"Changing schools and making new friends can be scary," 10-year-old Adonis explains. "It was really hard for me to leave my last school."

Through it all, Amanda says, the family tries to stay positive. "It's difficult," Amanda says. "But we've been fortunate to have each other to lean on."

Home at Last

For now, Juan is home. The Garcias expect to stay in Chula Vista for the next three years, though that could change. Instead of having to FaceTime their dad, Ava and Adonis are enjoying face-to-face time with him. But they know that he will one day be deployed again.

Juan doesn't want to be gone so often, but it's his duty.

"It's an honor to serve the United States and to make sure that our country and my family are safe," Juan says.

—by Alicia Green

WORDS TO KNOW

sacrifice *noun*. the act of giving up something to help others
deployed *verb, past tense*. moved troops into position for possible military action

Sailors on board hold more than **90 jobs**—including pilots, divers, chefs, and mechanics.

The ship is **244 feet tall**—as tall as a 24-story building.

Nearly **19,000 meals** are served daily.

About **5,500 sailors** live and work on the ship.